



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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witham.gov.uk

AGENDA

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 2nd September 2024** Time: **7:30 p.m.**

Place: **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present:

Councillors:

L. Barlow	(Town Mayor)	T. Hewitt
P. Heath	(Deputy Town Mayor)	J. Martin
E. Adelaja		R. Playle
P. Barlow		R. Ramage
J.C. Coleman		J. Robertson
J.M. Coleman		A. Sloma
B. Fleet		B. Taylor
L. Headley		E. Williams

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

NS/GK/28.8.2024

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 5th August 2024 and from the Extraordinary Meeting held 27th August 2024 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

To receive any declarations of interest that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this agenda.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

To receive reports from Essex County and Braintree District Councillors on matters relating to Witham.

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

To receive details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 1st to 27th August 2024 attached at page 4.

7. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the Town Clerk's report on matters arising attached at page 5.

8. EASTLIGHT

To discuss the issues raised by a member of the public at the previous meeting held on 5th August 2024.

9. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

To receive a letter from PKF Littlejohn LLP and Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate attached at page 6.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 5th and 19th August 2024**
Minutes 67 to 90 (inclusive)

To receive a report of the Meetings.

- (b) **Community Committee held 19th August 2024**
Minutes 19 to 35 (inclusive)

To receive a report of the Meeting.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

TO RESOLVE That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

12. COMMITTEE REPORT – CONTINUED

Community Committee held 19th August 2024

Minute 36.

To receive a report of the Meeting.

13. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

To continue the Town Clerk's report on matters arising.

14. LAND TRANSFER

To receive a report attached at page .

15. FOREST ROAD POND

To receive a report attached at page .

16. ASSET TRANSFER

To receive a report attached at page .



LIST OF MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN

1ST – 27TH AUGUST 2024

Friday, 9th August 2024, Witham Teddy Bears' Picnic

Attended the Witham Teddy Bears' Picnic on the River Walk that was run by the Town Council.

Saturday, 10th August 2024, Sponsored Workout of the Day (WOD)

Held a sponsored Workout of the Day (WOD) alongside other members of CrossFit Blackwater. This was a challenging 40-minute HIIT-style workout whilst wearing a 10kg weight vest to represent the chain of office to raise money for her chosen charities, Home - Start and Kids Inspire.

Saturday, 24th August 2024, Music on the Brain

Attended the Town Council organised event, Music on the Brain, held on the River Walk.

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ITEM NO: 7

Officer Report: [Town Clerk's Report](#)

Skate Park Improvements

The skate park is due to be completed within the next week.

Witham Street Entertainment Festival

The next WTC event is being held on Saturday 21st September 2024 10.00-3.00pm. Members will be required to run a stall throughout the event so please let the office know your availability.

Advice: To receive and note.

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Ms Nikki Smith
Witham Town Council
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Essex
CM8 2FE

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Email:
sba@pkf-l.com

Date:
13 August 2024

Our Ref:
EX0279

SAAA Ref:
SB09562

**Witham Town Council
Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2024**

Dear Ms Smith

We have completed our review of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for Witham Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2024. Please find our external auditor report and certificate (Section 3 of the AGAR Form 3) included for your attention as an attachment to the email containing this letter along with a copy of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR, on which our report is based.

The external auditor report and certificate details any matters arising from the review. The smaller authority must consider these matters and decide what, if any, action is required.

Action you are required to take at the conclusion of the review

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

- Prepare a "Notice of conclusion of audit" which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements. We attach a pro forma notice you may use for this purpose (a Word version is available on request).
- Publish the "Notice" along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September, which must include publication on the smaller authority's website. (Please note that when the statute and regulations were amended in 2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the "Notice" must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision).
- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

 **PKF Littlejohn LLP**
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Fee

We enclose our fee note, on page 4 of this attachment, for the limited assurance review, which is in accordance with the fee scales set by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd which can be found at <https://www.saaa.co.uk/audit-fees/>. This fee is statutory, must be paid and is due immediately on receipt of invoice, please arrange for this to be paid **at the earliest opportunity**.

Additional charges are itemised on the fee note, where applicable. These arise where either:

- we have had to issue chaser letters and/or exercise our statutory powers due to a failure to provide an AGAR by the submission deadline; or
- it was necessary for us to undertake additional work.

Please return the remittance advice with your payment, which should be sent to: PKF Littlejohn LLP, Ref: Credit control (SBA), 5th Floor, 15 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4HD. Please include the reference EX0279 or Witham Town Council as a reference when paying by BACS.

Timetable for 2024/25

Next year we plan to set a submission deadline for the return of the completed AGAR Form 3 and associated documents (or Certificate of Exemption) in the usual way and this is expected to be Tuesday 1 July 2025. It is anticipated that the instructions will be sent out during March 2025, subject to arrangements for the 2024/25 AGARs and Certificates of Exemption being finalised by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA). Our instructions will cover any changes about which smaller authorities need to be aware.

- The smaller authority must inform the electorate of a single period of 30 working days during which public rights may be exercised. The period must be **exactly** 30 working days, please do not set public rights dates that cover a longer period. This information **must be published at least the day before** the inspection period commences;
- The inspection period **must** include the first 10 working days of July 2025, i.e. 1 to 14 July inclusive. In practice this means that public rights may be exercised:
 - at the earliest, between Tuesday 3 June and Monday 14 July 2025; and
 - at the latest, between Tuesday 1 July and Monday 11 August 2025.

As in previous years, in order to assist you in this process we plan to include a pro forma template notice with a suggested inspection period on our website. On submitting your AGAR and associated documentation, as was the case for this year, we will need you to either confirm that the suggested dates have been adopted or inform us of the alternative dates selected.

Feedback on 2023/24

Please note that if you wish to provide feedback, our satisfaction survey template can be used, which is available on our website on this page: <https://www.pkf-l.com/services/limited-assurance-regime/useful-information-and-links/>

Yours sincerely

PKF Littlejohn LV

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

13/05/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE 29/TC 24/25

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Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair



Clerk



Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	541,959	578,643	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	704,406	797,141	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	120,123	318,827	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	441,400	531,585	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	346,445	516,963	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	578,643	646,063	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).

8. Total value of cash and short term investments	566,171	594,329	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	1,151,846	1,198,321	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0		The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

N.S.M.A.

Date

01/05/2024

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

13/05/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE 30/TC 24/25

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

A.S.O.

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Witham Town Council – EX0279**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2023/24

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:


None.

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature 

Date **11/08/2024**